

2016 Best Buddies Conference

By: Genevieve M Lewis

I had the opportunity to attend the Best Buddies National Conference at the University of Indiana in Bloomington, Indiana from July 22 through July 25. From the very first day I felt like I belonged. They did not see my disability, they saw me as Genna. Part of the Best Buddies' mission is One to One Friendships and Inclusion. During the three days I spent there, I felt included and made a lot of new friends and saw some old ones, too. Best Buddies has given me the opportunity to join their organization and their family. At the opening ceremonies, Anthony Kennedy Shriver asked for all the Ambassadors in the room that were just trained to please stand. It was on live stream and my mother was watching. After it was over, I texted her and she said how proud she was of me and that I was on camera for a really long time.... I am Genna and I am an Ambassador for Best Buddies! During the three days we had classes in the morning and as Ambassadors, we were working on our speeches and paired up with a speech coach. At night they had activities such as a Best Buddies walk, karaoke, and Closing Ceremonies. We danced the night away on Sunday evening!

Words cannot describe how much Best Buddies has done for me in this past year. I hope I can stay involved and help ADVOCATE for more inclusion with the state of Connecticut for this awesome organization. Everyone needs someone to be their friend, include them in their everyday life and inspire individuals with IDD. I am proud of who I am and that I get to share my story with the Best Buddies organization. I FEEL ACCEPTED!!

